

# THE GREEN CALDRON

A MAGAZINE OF FRESHMAN WRITING

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Vol. ~~29~~, No. 1

October, 1960

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

THE GREEN CALDRON is published four times a year by the Rhetoric Staff at the University of Illinois. Material is chosen from themes and examinations written by freshmen in the University. Permission to publish is obtained for all full themes, including those published anonymously. Parts of themes, however, are published at the discretion of the committee in charge.

Members of the committee in charge of *The Green Caldron* are R. P. Armato, Thomas Boyle, R. W. Lewis, Mary Trippet, and William McQueen, editor.

# Why We Need More Westerns on Television

MARY LOUISE BORGMON

*Rhetoric 102, Theme 9*

THE OTHER NIGHT I SAW A WONDERFUL WESTERN ON television. It had just about everything you'd want—fast horses, handsome men, beautiful women, mean outlaws, sneaky Indians, waving grass, rolling plains, covered wagons, smoking pistols, hard liquor, torrid love, bitter tears, bloody death—just everything you could ask for, all packed together into one little hour, and early enough for the kids to see it, too. This program was really something and I think we need lots more just like it, because programs like that teach lots of things that everybody ought to know—things that help us in our everyday life, and at other times, too. I'll tell you what I mean.

Take making friends, for instance. Most people are pretty slow at this, but they don't have to be. This program showed that a person can make friends quickly if he really tries. There was a trail scout in this story and a Russian countess, and at the beginning, they didn't even know each other, but before the first commercial, which came about four minutes after they met, they were already lying in the grass and kissing, just as if they'd known each other for years. I think we should all take a lesson from this—it's sort of a symbol. A Russian and an American making love on the prairie under the sky. It has a lot of meaning to it.

Another thing about westerns is that they show the difference between good and bad people. After you watch a few westerns, it's pretty easy to tell which is which. The good men, for instance, seldom have beards or whiskers, and most of the bad men do. Also, the good man never shoots a person in the back—he waits until the person turns around to face him, which is the decent thing to do. On the other hand, bad men will shoot a man anywhere and will even shoot a woman or a dog sometimes. Speaking of women, there are good ones and bad ones, just like men. The good ones are usually married, while the bad ones usually aren't. The bad women usually wear real low-cut dresses or short ones, and the good women usually have on aprons; they might wear pretty tight dresses (the young good ones, that is; the old good women wear loose dresses), but they're hardly ever cut low. All these things are very helpful to people watching the program, because



they know right away whose side to be on. And just like knowing how to make friends quickly, it's very helpful in life to know whose side to be on.

One of the best things westerns teach is our country's history. I'll bet people with television sets know lots more about history than people without television sets, because westerns on television are just crammed with history. They tell how we had to fight the pagan Indians every step of the way to get them to give us this land so that we could really make something out of it. (We let them go on living here, after we won the land fair and square, and we even gave them special areas called "reservations" to live on. They're real nice places—sort of like wild game preserves to keep animals from becoming what they call "extinct.")

When you start thinking about all the advantages of watching westerns, it's pretty plain to see that we ought to have more of them. There has been a lot of progress made toward getting more westerns on television, and you can see a good western almost any time except Sunday. Unfortunately, on Sunday afternoons there are things like symphony orchestras, documentary films and panel discussions—real dull, long-hair stuff that most Americans wouldn't be interested in. The only good thing about Sunday is that before you know it, it's Monday again, and the beginning of a whole new week of interesting, educational, realistic, historical westerns. But friends, we've got to do something about Sunday afternoons.

## One World?

ANNE SHIPLEY

*Rhetoric 102, Final Exam*

WITH JET AIRLINERS HOPPING FROM ONE CONTINENT to another in a matter of a few hours, with collective agreements binding nations together, with the United Nations Building overlooking New York harbor as a symbol of international cooperation, many Americans are hopefully forecasting that day in the near future when national walls will be broken down, and the world will be unified politically, economically, and socially. Although this ultimate goal may seem to be far in the future, these internationalistic optimists feel, nevertheless, that the number of sovereign nations will rapidly and permanently diminish as nations unite to form larger states.

However, in my opinion, world unification is no closer now than it was a century or more ago. In the few years since World War II, innumerable colonies have broken the imperialistic chains and established themselves as

sovereign nations—India, Pakistan, Burma, Ghana . . . These new countries are anxious to maintain their newly won independence; they avoid the various alliances. Peoples that are still living under foreign domination are awaiting the day when they, too, can become independent. When they do, one can be sure that they will avoid “entangling alliances” that might inextricably bind them once again to foreign nations. Thus, rather than fewer nations in the future, I can easily see countless small nations dotting the world maps.

The internationalists then point to the numerous alliances between the older nations—and some of the new ones too. With admirable speed, they rapidly list these organizations—NATO, SEATO, SHAPE, Rio Pact, Baghdad Pact, United Arab League . . . They compare the European economic alliances like the Common Market to the nineteenth-century German *Zollverein*, or customs union, which helped pave the way to German unification. Finally, they point to the United Nations—eighty countries co-operating to maintain world peace and well-being.

This lengthy list sounds very impressive until one examines the nature of these organizations more carefully. First, it must be remembered that NATO, SEATO, etc. are merely defense agreements to maintain the balance of power against the Communist block. Alliances of this type are not new; they can be found as far back as the seventeenth century. Until nations began to try to keep the peace through collective security, the common method was to maintain a balance of power. Recent examples include the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente before World War I, and the Little Entente before World War II. Nations have now returned to the old balance-of-power system by establishing these alliances with their present allies, no longer trusting the attempts at collective security.

Second, it must be admitted that the *Zollverein* did further German unity, and that it would seem, therefore, that the present economic alliances are leading the way to eventual European unity. However, the various German states were also culturally united—language, religion, heritage. European states, on the other hand, are proud of their own national heritage. To tell the Frenchman that he is the same as the German except for language would be asking for a fight. In other words, to have political union, it is first necessary to have cultural union, which the European states do not have. Moreover, I firmly believe that these economic alliances with free trade, etc. will last as long as economic prosperity does. As soon, however, as nations feel the economic squeeze, tariff walls will be rebuilt. England, for example, after advocating free trade all during the prosperous nineteenth century, lost no time in returning to a policy of protection in 1930 when the Great Depression came.

Finally, I feel that the United Nations merely reflects the efforts of the nations to achieve the balance of power. The Security Council has become



a debating club with West versus East. Nothing can be accomplished without the concession of both patries. Russia wants Communist China on the Security Council to achieve that wanted balance of power. The West wants her out of the Council because, as it stands, the West has the advantage.

Therefore, in spite of all the promising alliances and organizations, the world is no closer to achieving unification than it was a century or more ago. As countless nations join the ranks of the independent, older ones are anxiously trying to preserve the old balance of power.

## Footprints on the Ceiling

RICHARD STORINGER

*Rhetoric 101, Theme 3*

THE FOOTPRINTS ON THE CEILING: SOME CHARACTER who had the room last semester or the semester before or some time since they last painted the ceiling probably stretched himself out on the top bunk with his shoes on. And then maybe he got a crazy idea and put his feet up to the ceiling and made a pattern of footprints stretching over the area above the bed. I'd say the guy was probably just goofing off a little like you do sometimes. But then this type of jerk that calls Elvis Presley a sex-symbol would probably say that the fellow with the feet was rebelling against society or some trash like that.

There are always characters like that. I mean the guy that tells you why you do things, giving you deep, dark psychologically confused motivations when really you only do things because they're the natural thing to do and maybe you sort of enjoy doing them.

Of course, even I'd have to admit that there are some people who everything they do is like a rebellion against society. They're called "Beatniks" now. They're pretty obviously messed up in their minds and they're mad at everybody, probably just because they haven't got the guts to absorb a little intellectual opposition. Because there are certain things that they don't like, they draw themselves into a little corner and yell that everybody is crazy but them.

But the normal people, like the guy who put his footprints on the ceiling, maybe they're experimenting a little, you know, like trying to see just what rules can be broken and what rules can't.

Well, what the heck, they come into the world and they don't have a thing to say about how things are or how they're going to be. Let's face it. All the rules have been made, and they've been made for a long time. Sure,

there'll be modifications, but they all follow a set pattern that can't be changed. Besides, even if it were possible for a fellow to have something to say about the way things go, his own patterns have already been set by the society he's been brought up in, and even if he doesn't like what's happening, he doesn't know how to change it, because that's one thing he's never been taught.

So, like I say, he just experiments a little, to see what he can get away with. In a little while, he'll settle down and learn to be like everybody else, just like the people who came before him did. He'll stop breaking the rules by then.

Maybe like the symbol-crazy fellow would say, this guy with the feet is rebelling against society. Or maybe he's just being a normal, gung-ho college student and he's goofing off a little bit and he doesn't have any emotional problems that are making him put his feet up on the ceiling without taking his shoes off and not even knowing why he's doing it.

But the footprints are there. And the rules can't be changed.

In a way, I sort of feel sorry for the guy with the feet. There's always somebody to tell him what to do and how to do it, and if he doesn't he's symbolizing Youth's Antagonism Toward Maturity or some such junk.

I feel like writing "go to hell" on the wall. But I know I won't.

## Conformity

JOHN SAUNDERS

*Rhetoric 101, Theme C*

WHAT IS CONFORMITY? MANY THINK OF IT AS A FOUL word. Others use it as a creed in life. In reality it means simply being inconspicuous. A man who moves with the traffic is a conformist. Conformity is Order.

Is conformity bad? The nonconformists says the person who shapes himself to the mold of society has no individuality; however, the ego of the conformist has more opportunity to assert itself than that of the nonconformist. The conformist does not have to worry about whether he is like another or not. His mind is free to work on other problems of more importance. Conformity is freedom.

Is conformity necessary? Yes. Conformity eliminates friction in society. It allows the minds of men to grow without the restricting fetters of worry and fear. Conformity is a mold for a way of life. Conformity is civilization.



# When It's Ajar

THOMAS A. MCGREEVEY

*Rhetoric 101, Theme*

WORDS EXPAND AND COVER BROADER AREAS BECAUSE of man's need to verbalize what his mind conceives. When an expanded meaning has become widely accepted, that meaning is added to the existing ones. Words become distorted when the same word will serve to identify two or more completely disparate ideas. When this happens, there is no real solution for the lexicographers. Such words usually represent a universal concept which has not changed basically, but which has been discarded for the sake of expediency. And the greatest of these is Charity.

The root of the word "charity" is *caritas*, a Latin word meaning "dearness" or "love." The first meaning that *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* gives for "charity" is "Christian Love; Act of loving all men as brothers because they are sons of God." The third meaning is "almsgiving"; and the fifth, and last, meaning is "an institution or foundation."

In our immense and complex society, this final definition has come to supersede all others. Like Scrooge, modern man when questioned about the needy can reply coolly that there are any number of institutions ready and able to take care of them. He will say that he has too little time free from his job and home to devote personally to charitable work, but, at one time or another, he has responded generously to appeals from the DAV, the ARC, the UJA, the March of Dimes, the Heart Fund, the Gold Star Crusade and a host of others. He will assure his questioner that this is as it should be because more people are helped when the distribution of alms is organized. And he will say that when he donates to an organized charity he knows where his money is going and what it will be used for; in addition, donations are tax-deductable when given to a "recognized" charity.

Thus, the institution or foundation, that ponderous giant of organized aid, with a hierarchy more complex than civil service and a bank balance that would shame an insurance company, provides a buffer between the donor and the charity case. It spares the embarrassment of a personal contact which might prove distasteful. It translates the cries of the sick, the infirm, the helpless, the destitute, the insane—the cloacal flotsam of man's inhumanity to his brother—into animated cartoons and unctuously humorous voices, or into warm appeals from popular movie stars, and insinuates them between television programs. By its appearance and atmosphere, it creates for the needy person the impression that he is receiving a bank loan without the need for collateral or repayment. It succeeds completely in destroying any vestige of humaneness in its charity.



Is this Charity? Is it "Christian Love" to appoint someone else our brother's keeper? No, it is not. It is the sounding brass and the tinkling bell, but it is not charity. It is what Pascal called: "... not God, but His image and idol, which we must neither love nor worship."

## A Conformist

JOE MILES

*Rhetoric 101, Theme 7*

ONE DICTIONARY DEFINES A CONFORMIST AS A PERSON who acts in accordance or harmony with some pattern, example, or principle. I feel, however, that this definition is too broad. Isn't it possible for one to be doing what the majority is doing and still not be a conformist?

Consider Mr. Johnson, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Brown. They are attending a speech given by the governor of their state during his campaign for re-election. After a few introductory remarks, the governor attacks his opponent with a fervor reserved for those seeking political office. He is warmly received, with Mr. Johnson, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Brown all joining in the applause. All three of these men are acting in accordance with the prevailing pattern, but are they all conformists?

Mr. Johnson has read nothing about the issues of the campaign, and he has no idea of what arguments the governor's opponent might use in rebuttal. The enthusiasm of the audience and the persuasiveness of the governor's delivery are all that are necessary to start him clapping. Once started, he is one of the governor's loudest supporters.

Mr. Smith has made some study of the issues of the campaign, and, before he came to the speech, he had planned to vote for the governor's opponent. Nothing in the governor's attack on his opponent really makes sense to Mr. Smith. Yet when everyone else applauds, Mr. Smith applauds also, perhaps fearing the ridicule of admitting he does not understand the governor's position, perhaps thinking, "This many people can't be wrong."

Mr. Brown also has studied the campaign, but he has decided that the governor should be re-elected. For this reason only, he joins in the applause. The clapping of the Johnsons and Smiths does not affect his thinking.

Although all three men fall within the dictionary's definition of a conformist, I feel that only Mr. Johnson and Mr. Smith are, in fact, conformists. Mr. Brown is not a conformist because the driving force behind the actions of a conformist is not his own mind but the actions of others. Unless this modification of the dictionary's definition is made, Mr. Brown is, I feel, unjustly classed as a conformist.

# Habit – Variety = Monotony

JERRY BRAND

*Rhetoric 102, Theme 6*

THE SHOW IS OUT AND WHILE ONE IS MENTALLY RE-creating the final scene in which the young bride, Gina Lolobrigida, was being carried into the honeymoon apartment, the right hand is deftly searching for the pack of cigarettes. One may not be fully aware of the right hand's actions if the cigarettes are found soon. However, if the cigarettes are not found soon, one quickly becomes aware of the situation and if he is not in the vicinity of a cigarette vendor, panic soon strikes. The degree of panic varies directly with the degree of addiction. Even if a cigarette vendor is nearby, the initial reaction to the thought of being out of cigarettes is one of alarm. The time required for this feeling of alarm to pass away is dependent upon the line of action adopted by the cigarette addict to satisfy his desperate yearning for a smoke.

A similar reaction of alarm is experienced whenever one is deprived of any anticipated reaction or activity, such as eating, entering a dark room and flicking on the light switch, pressing on the brake of an automobile as one is approaching a red stop light, or perhaps sleeping with one's wife. The expected reaction when one goes home to eat a meal is, perhaps, to find it waiting for him. If it is not, he will more than likely be surprised. Likewise, one is momentarily amazed when the little light bulb does not come on when the switch is flicked. A feeling of fear seizes one when the brakes of the car do not react to the pressure applied to the brake pedal. One's reaction to being unable to sleep with his wife is dependent on what he is expecting when he goes to bed with his wife.

What is the significance of these observations? Their significance lies in the fact that one may condition his body, through regular and prolonged repetition, to the extent that certain functions can be performed practically unconsciously. Once the body is conditioned to react to a given circumstance in a certain manner, its reaction is one of frustration when confronted with a new and different circumstance.

One might call the series of actions and reactions a habit. However, one must not confuse habit with monotony. For there may be variety within a habit while there is no variety in monotony. For example, one eats a meal approximately three times daily. If one were eating green beans, fried calf's liver, and onion rings each and every meal, this would be monotonous—to the extent of dread. On the other hand, if one has variety in the kinds of food he is eating, then eating may be termed merely habit. Cigarette smoking



would become monotonous if one were forced by some external condition to smoke a cigarette regularly after the passage of a certain time interval. The variety in smoking, therefore, lies not in the different brands of cigarettes, but in the fact that one may smoke a cigarette at any time. Thus one comes to the conclusion, if a conclusion can be reached from the material presented, that variety is the differentiating factor between monotony and habit.

## Steinbeck and Brotherhood

DONALD LEE FOX

*Rhetoric 101, Theme 4*

" . . . This tractor . . . turns the land and turns us off the land. There is little difference between this tractor and a tank. The people are driven, intimidated, hurt by both . . . For here 'I lost my land' is changed; a cell is split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate—'We lost *our* land' . . . Only a little multiplication now, and this land, this tractor are ours . . . The night draws down. The baby has a cold. Here, take this blanket. It's wool. It was my mother's blanket . . . This is the beginning . . .

"If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself. If you could separate causes from results, if you could know that Paine, Marx, Jefferson, Lenin, were results, not causes, you might survive. But that you cannot know. For the quality of owning freezes you forever into 'I', and cuts you off forever from the 'we'."

JOHN STEINBECK'S *GRAPES OF WRATH* WAS WRITTEN BY a bitterly angry man. The anger provided the vitality for the creation of a moving literary work; the bitterness kept that work from being an ageless classic and very nearly destroyed it.

Through the Depression-caused misery of the late Thirties, Steinbeck watched the rise of the "big picture" concept in our society, manifested on the one hand in paternalistic government that applied mass panaceas with no thought of the havoc so often brought to the individual, and on the other hand by an economic system that was learning too painfully and too well the relationships between profit, efficiency, and large-scale operation. He watched the so-called little man pushed and shoved through bread lines and drafted into WPA projects and CCC camps; watched the exploitation of this same little man by big businesses; watched the lives of commonfolk wrenched violently into alien patterns, the individual stripped of whatever dignity he might have had. And finally, when he saw man torn from the ancient stronghold of security, the land itself, he began to write and tell us not only of his anger but of his long-developing philosophy of man's ultimate responsibility to man.

His medium is the Joad family, which is clawing a harshly primitive subsistence from a small rented farm in Oklahoma's Dust Bowl. Tom Joad

returns from four years in prison to find his people dispossessed by the landowner who is being forced to large scale, mechanized farming in order to survive economically. The family's plans are already made—they are going to California, where the land is rich, the pay golden, and the fruit falls from the tree all year round. In Tom's inability even to think of taking any course of action other than to go with his family, Steinbeck makes the first of his statements on the only means of salvation open to man—unity, beginning with the tightly knit family.

The Joad family's progress across country can be described as a poor man's Odyssey, filled with a multitude of rich details, graphically moving incidents, and vivid personalities. The only unifying element is the single underlying drive of the family to reach its goal. Grampa dies early in the trip; Granma, just before they reach California. Rose of Sharon, Tom's sister, expecting her first child, is deserted by her husband. And always waiting around the next bend in the road is some sort of peril: violent rejections from the towns that fear an invasion of "foreigners" who could consume what few jobs and what scant food there are, exploitation by men looking for cheap labor, starvation, illness, strikebreakers, lawmen, and groups without law.

At last they reach California, but their first sight of the verdant valleys is succeeded by less favorable impressions as they find here the same miserable conditions that hounded them all through their trip. Even in the democratic government camp, with all the blessings of indoor plumbing, they learn that physical comfort is a sterile, killing thing without some occupation. They move on; finally Tom kills a strikebreaker and at the end throws in his lot irrevocably with the strikers and so with all the downtrodden, rebellious men who are trying to break free of the chains of poverty and oppression ("They's a whole army a us without a harness."). The story ends with the stillbirth of Rose of Sharon's child in a boxcar the Joads have converted into a shelter, while torrential rains bring flood and turn the land into a sea of mud.

What holds it all together, this narrative of a family's odyssey that ends seemingly without an end? The cement is Steinbeck's message that we are all our brother's keeper, that mankind's survival depends upon a soul-felt unity. He makes the point in incidents both large and small: the truck-stop waitress who insists that nickel candy bars are two for a penny so that two small, gaunt Okie boys can have a touch of something good in their lives; the family just met on the road that contributes a good quilt to Grampa Joad's dying and burial with a simple, "We're proud to help"; and the terrible beauty of Rose of Sharon's act in the last pages of the novel, the offering of her now useless milk to help save the life of a stranger so far gone in starvation he can no longer eat. These are the great things of the novel.

It is when Steinbeck attempts to offer a solution for mankind's lack of



vision that he begins to falter. He rejects Christianity in the character of Casy, the reformed preacher—"I ain't preachin' no more. The sperit ain't in the people much no more . . . The hell with it! There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do . . . that's as far as any man got a right to say . . . maybe it's all men and all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit . . . Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of." Couple this with Steinbeck's aversion to "the quality of owning" and the inevitable conclusion is nothing more than strongly advocated socialism, absolute. A comparison of socialism and capitalism is irrelevant here, but I would like to comment that his choice was a perfectly normal and even predictable one under the then prevailing socio-economic circumstances. The majority of the civilized world's intellectuals were holding regular wakes for capitalism at that time.

Thus, having made his point about brotherhood, Steinbeck proceeds to deny it. In his bitterness he excludes from the great community of mankind a large and important segment of mankind—the "haves." Again and again, until it is first infuriating and then somewhat ludicrous, he blasts all those who presume to have more than the Joads and their peers: predatory car salesmen dispose of useless jalopies to migrating Okies; a dog is killed by a "big, swift car" that doesn't stop; the entire opening of chapter fifteen is devoted to a grossly distorted description of the bloated, sexually frustrated, cruel, bored, and effete rich, and the remainder is a comparison of the salt-of-the-earth Okies; a millionaire holder of thousands of acres of fertile land is reputed to be afraid of death but "Grampa wasn't scairt"; and Ma Joad intones, "Why, Tom—us people will go on livin' when all them people is gone . . . Rich fellas come up an' they die, an' their kids ain't no good, an' they die out."

The other side of the coin is the deification of the destitute and an absolution from responsibility for at least some of their own acts. We learn from Ma Joad that "Purty Boy Floyd" was merely high-spirited until society in the form of the law hurt him until "he was jus' a walkin' chunk a mean-mad," and it goes on and on, culminating in Tom's account of Casy's last words before his murder by the strikebreakers: "An' Casy says, 'You don't know what you're a-doin',' an' then this guy smashed 'im." The crucifixion overtones are undeniable.

And so it is that in his fury and his deep hurt at the violence and pain men inflict upon one another, with anger at their indifference to their duty to one another, Steinbeck in turn forgets that the "haves" are people, too, who suffer and rejoice, live and die; he ceases to hear the words of his own most thought-provoking character, Casy, who says to Tom and to us all—

"Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of."

# City Within a City

SANDRA WILLARD

*Rhetoric 101, Theme 1*

THE DAY IS HOT, THE SUN BRIGHT, BUT SOMEHOW THE sun's rays barely filter through to the deteriorated streets—streets shadowed by the crumbling, leaning buildings and the heavy structures of the elevated tracks. This is a strange, humid, dark city within a city.

It has its own character familiar to its own inhabitants, hostile to outsiders and it has its own noises: the sound of pushcart vendors hawking their wares, the whine of the knife sharpener's stone, the sound of horsedrawn carts on the pavement, the mournful note of voices singing from some distant, dingy hallway. The streets smell of rank decay, the decay of litter strewn on the curbs and the sidewalks, the smell of condemned but still inhabited buildings, and of the people who abide there.

The city is not without its people. They have their own way of life, as strange and depressing as the streets which they have made their own. A woman strolls aimlessly along, upthrust chin, defiant eyes in a mask-like over-powdered face. Two small boys in tattered tee shirts and bare feet race past, knocking into an old stooped man who mutters incoherently as he staggers down the street. A young girl stands by a music grinder's machine watching her withered arm with morbid fascination as it turns the crank.

They have conditioned themselves to be indifferent to the problems of people in their own society. They are suspicious and resentful of intruders. A baby sits in an empty display window of a store playing with a long, cruel-looking knife. A large, dark woman stands, hands on hips, in a doorway across the street, scrutinizing three white girls. She turns abruptly, enters the dim hallway, and slams the door of the dilapidated apartment.

This city with its smells, its sounds, and its people is surrounded, crowded, and literally crushed by the buildings that are or should be condemned. Some are partially destroyed, either by man or by age. They lean against one another for support; they sag in every direction. Bits of ragged cloth flutter out of windows that have lost their panes of glass. People are still living in these tenements, crowded between makeshift cardboard and plywood partitions and unsteady, creaking floors.

Everywhere there is idleness and depression. Men in dirty underwear and wrinkled slacks sit on fire escapes, staring ahead but seeing nothing. They sit in their rooms, in restaurants and taverns, and on sidewalks. The day grows hotter. Steam rises from the open sewers. The air is thick with smoke from the factories and the stench from the streets. The people sit and wait—wait for darkness to cool and blot out the streets they have made their own and can't leave.



# A Materialist Afterlife

JOHN MARXEN

*Rhetoric 102, Theme 13*

BEING A MATERIALIST AND A SKEPTIC, AND YET, LIKE every human being, unable to believe in the eventual destruction of my consciousness, I have tried to formulate out of my reading and experience a factual basis for this opinion. I prefer not to trust to faith, but to extrapolate from scientific facts. In this paper I am dealing with the question of the survival of the soul after death—arbitrarily defining the soul as the conscious mind, the sum total of a life's memories and the personality which is their resultant. If the soul should be other than this, it would be senseless to speculate upon its survival, for this survival would not concern us.

Since prehistoric times men have debated the questions of the nature of the soul, of the relationship of the soul to the body, and of the possibilities of the soul's surviving after death. We have not yet arrived at any sort of agreement on the subject, and no evidence is available on either side of the argument. It is conceivable that no answer will ever be found, but it is more likely that we have been asking the wrong questions. Certain discoveries of the past suggest that these ancient questions may be rephrased in modern terms, and may even be answered.

These discoveries have not been in the field of theology or philosophy; philosophers and theologians have not produced a definite answer after thousands of years of speculation; perhaps we had better look elsewhere for the answer. The fields of biochemistry, neurology, and relativity physics have already provided the basis for a new line of questioning.

That science could solve such an essentially theological question as that given in the first paragraph may seem unlikely (or even blasphemous) to many people. But science has, in the past, settled many theological questions and disproved many dogmatic assumptions about the universe without in any way lessening the basic truth—if such exists—of a religion's teachings. The truth is never less awe-inspiring, less beautiful than the superstition.

The general workings of the brain—the operation of memory, perception, and reason—are fairly well understood by contemporary neurologists; there is nothing really mysterious about the brain, it is merely more complex than any device produced artificially. Our present knowledge indicates that it is theoretically quite possible to construct a calculating machine that could duplicate in every detail the workings of the brain. Machines already built

are capable of memorization, reasoning, learning, perception, and even of making random choices when such are necessary. A hypothetical "artificial human being" would be enormously more complex than these, but it would not be different in kind.

All this is meant to demonstrate that there is nothing transcendental about the human mind. The mind *is* a calculating machine, but it is not "merely" a calculating machine. The material (whether protoplasm or metal) is unimportant—it is the pattern which is of importance.

It follows logically from this that it might be possible to transfer the pattern of a man's mind from one medium to another without affecting the pattern at all, just as it is possible to make reproductions of a painting without sacrificing any of its aesthetic value. A technique for such a transference of minds would make possible one kind of immortality, but it would still not solve the question as stated at the beginning of this paper. For the mind-pattern must have a suitable vehicle; it cannot exist by itself any more than whiteness can exist apart from a white object. When the body dies, and the brain with it, does the mind necessarily do the same? It will probably be thousands of years before any kind of artificial immortality is possible; are the souls of all who died or will die before that time doomed to mere nonexistence? Or does there exist somewhere a record of their thoughts and memories? The laws of relativity physics provide a possible answer. Space time itself has a structure and can bear patterns—the particles and waves which constitute the material universe are themselves such patterns. Gravity and magnetism are also, in reality, no more than configurations of the substance of space time. The infinitely subtle kinetic energy of a living brain is as indestructible as any form of energy, and, just as sound when it fades from our hearing, it continues to exist after the body's death as an indestructible pattern in space. The pattern, which is the essence of the mind, cannot but survive.

Whether a disembodied mind would have the power of perception is questionable. The great number of cases of clairvoyance and telepathy on record would seem to indicate that this is possible, but we know nothing of the mechanism of these "wild talents." It may also be assumed from the evidence available that the minds of the physically dead could be in communion with each other—similar vibrations in the same medium would be continually affecting each other—but again, nothing can be proved. There is the possibility that the experience of dying would be traumatic enough to destroy the pattern of a person's mind completely or render it irrevocably and eternally insane. Or perhaps the free mind, after centuries of subjective time spent in introspection and repentance, would become purified and perfected. And perhaps this is what heaven is.



# Devoted to a Dream

FRANK HATFIELD

*Rhetoric 101, Theme 7*

JOHN A. KENT

Former Music Teacher From London

Will give lessons on guitar

(all styles), 4 and 5 string banjo,  
mandolin, and piano accordion.

Lawnmowers sharpened.

AFTER STRUGGLING FOR AN AWKWARD MOMENT TO suppress a chuckle, I endeavored to convince Mr. Kent to rewrite his advertising copy, omitting the anomaly concerning lawnmowers and rewording the second line to make it appear that he was a presently active music teacher who had once lived in London. He consented to the revisions, so I corrected the copy and pocketed it with the intention of turning it in to the school newspaper the next day.

I had been studying the Spanish guitar under Mr. Kent's instruction for almost a year, but that short ad was a better character evaluation than I could have written in a thousand words. A mention of England, a mention of mechanics, his name in capital letters, and a rather amazing statement of his preoccupation with music—these seemed to me to be an excellent comment on Mr. Kent's life.

An impractical dreamer and a self-supposed man of destiny, Mr. Kent has devoted more than twenty of his thirty years to studying the five-string, finger-style banjo. He has reached heights of virtuosity on this now rare instrument equaled by not more than a dozen living Americans, all of whom are unknown outside the ranks of fretted-instrument players. Mr. Kent's devotion to the banjo often reaches frightful extremes of fanaticism. It is not unusual for him to entertain guests by seating them just ten feet in front of his huge amplifier, turning the volume to maximum, taping a contact microphone to the vellum of his banjo, and proceeding to play an hour long program of solos ranging from "Whistling Rufus" to "Hungarian Rhapsody." The effect is similar to John Henry driving a carefully tuned granite drill through the visitors' aching heads.

A disciple of Ves Ossman, Mr. Kent would like to follow the banjo master's prescription for ten hours of practice each day, but financial problems force him to devote his energies to overtime work in an attempt to drive the wolf from the door. He is still paying for three cars, the previously mentioned amplifier, an ancient factory-sized metal lathe, and a gigantic planer. The last two items represent Mr. Kent's conception of a



SENTIMENTAL WRITING MAY BE DEFINED AS THAT WRITING which uses trite phrases and overly emotional words, usually to express excessive anguish, self-pity, or useless longing for the past. It is incapable of conveying any deep or profound meaning, and its value is probably seen and appreciated only by the author. The opposite of sentimentality is restraint. Its effect depends upon careful understatement and originality to convey meaning, and it is always preferable to sentimentality when one wishes to arouse emotion in his readers. A gushing overflow of sentimental words drowns the readers's sensitivity to any emotional tone which may be present in the writing, and his immediate reaction will probably be disgust rather than sympathetic understanding and appreciation.

The advantage of understatement over flowery, trite writing can easily be seen by comparing the opening words of two poems about death, a particularly pertinent subject since it is so often expressed in sentimental words and worn-out expressions. The terse, almost blasé statement "Buffalo Bill's defunct" strikes the reader with its original presentation of this often trite theme, whereas the introductory words "My little Rose is withered now; On earth's soft breast she lays her head" are likely to alienate the reader with their triteness and singsong rhythm. Compare the originality of the following lines, "who used to/ride a watersmooth-silver stallion/and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat" with "A goodly child and full of glee/With sweetness in each laughing smile. . . ." Both are attempts to tell us something about the subjects' daily lives, but only the first is meaningful. It conveys a sense of excitement and activity typical of the subject, while the words of the second quotation are vague, trite, and express nothing distinctive about their subject.

Further comparison can be made between the comments about the absence of a beloved person. "She lives yet in my memory/As now I walk life's lonely mile" seems very dull and uninspiring compared with the fascinating ". . . what I want to know is/how do you like your blueeyed boy/Mister Death"; the dullness of walking "life's lonely mile" is accentuated by the novel use of language in the second example.

These comparisons point out the contrast between sentimentality and restraint and the parallel differences between triteness and originality. The use of restrained writing is always preferable to the use of sentimental writing, since the former does not smother the sensitivities of the reader, is more likely to be original and inspiring, and is more capable of arousing interest and emotion in the reader.



# Stradivarian Tone

GEORGE W. HENRY

*Rhetoric 102, Theme 11*

"*ANTONIUS STRADIVARIUS CREMONENISIS FACIEBAT ANNO 17 . . . A + S.*"<sup>1</sup> This label, now rightfully borne by approximately 1600 musical instruments,<sup>2</sup> has come to represent the standard of comparison in the judgment of quality of stringed instruments, especially violins. Although the Stradivari violins were made over two centuries ago, no violin made since has surpassed the tone for which the Stradivari instruments are noted. Considering the enormous advances science has made during the last two hundred years, one might expect that someone would have equalled the tonal quality of the Strad by now. However, although the violins have been examined from most conceivable angles of approach, no one has been able to equal the tone, much less surpass it. What are we missing in the analyses? What secret process did the master craftsman use that we are not able to discover?

Since the test of any musical instrument is in the performance, or, in the case of the violin, the tone, an analysis of the reasons for the superiority of the Stradivari violins is necessarily centered on a discussion of tone and those factors that influence it. It is generally accepted that the tone of the violin is most dependent upon four intrinsic characteristics of the tone chamber: (1) the type of woods used, (2) the shape and size of the tone chamber, (3) the varnish, and (4) the quality of workmanship. The purpose of this paper is to explore these characteristics, their effect upon tone, and their treatment by Stradivari.

## I. The Tone of Stradivari Violins as Affected by Construction Materials.

The tone chamber of a violin is usually made up of a number of separate pieces of wood glued in place. Since the principal function of the tone chamber is to enforce and lend character to the tone emitted by the strings, the woods used in construction of the chamber must be good conductors of sound. The conductivity of a piece of wood is directly dependent upon its thickness and density.<sup>3</sup> As Robert Alton suggests,

In choosing wood for the plates of a violin . . . it is useful to consider the relative density of the material. For instance, a hard, close-grained back will give a sound more metallic in character . . . than will a soft, open-grained one . . . The thinner the plates, the more thin and shrill the tone.<sup>4</sup>

In general, the front and back plates (the belly and back) exert greater

influence over the tone than the sides and heads, partially because of greater area and partially because of shape.

Prior to 1684, Stradivari characteristically used maple for the backs and bellies of his violins. Although this wood lacked the response of high quality violin-wood, Stradivari was unable to purchase any better wood because of his limited funds. However, when Nicolo Amati, Stradivari's apprenticeship master died, he bequeathed all his tools and woods to Stradivari. Undoubtedly, during his lifetime Amati must have accumulated a rather extensive selection of wood, and this legacy was a very important item to Stradivari.<sup>5</sup> From Amati, Stradivari also inherited a quality without which he could not have succeeded in his field—the ability to judge and select wood best suited for violins.<sup>6</sup>

Stradivari's unique skill was first illustrated by his violins of 1685, the "Long Strads." Although the violins were not physically longer than their predecessors, the narrowed bodies gave the appearance of additional length, thus the name, "Long Strad."<sup>7</sup> This series of violins, Stradivari's first major deviation from the Amatese designs, began a long series of experiments with wood, shape, and varnish. In the course of these experiments, Stradivari often used different kinds of wood in the same tone chamber, giving the effect of combining the tone qualities of all the woods.<sup>8</sup> The balance of these pieces of various woods is quite important in the production of a fine, smooth tone.<sup>9</sup>

The study of Stradivarian tone often produces the conclusion that, since Stradivari violins are old, perhaps age improves the violin tone. However, Messrs. Moya and Piper disagree, "The effect of age on tone . . . is practically nil. It does not and never has created it."<sup>10</sup> Mr. Balfort further qualifies this statement, ". . . it is not age but mainly playing upon it (the violin) for a long period of time that can bring out all the possibilities of the instrument."<sup>11</sup>

## II. The Tone as Affected by Size and Shape of the Tone Chamber.

As would be expected, the dimensions of the tone chamber determine the pitch of the violin more than they determine the tone. However, various shadings or accentuations of tone can be achieved through minute adjustment of the size of the tone chamber. Because these minute adjustments actually alter the shape more than the size, the discussion of the physical proportions of the violin and their effect upon tone will be confined, for the most part, to the shape.

The chief source of tone control through shape is in the form and the tapering of the belly and back-plate. A high arch in the plates produces a tone which is sweet and mellow, but rather weak in power. On the other hand, a low arch will produce a hard, thin tone that is strong in power.

One of Stradivari's techniques was to build violins in which he balanced the amount of arch between the two extremes, thus achieving the best effects of both shapes without a sacrifice in tone or power.<sup>12</sup> As Robert Braine says,

"The violins of his best period departed from the high model of Amati which he at first used, for Stradivarius found that the higher model lacked volume and power and gave a tone which was somewhat high and piercing instead of mellow, luscious and golden."<sup>13</sup>

Stradivari continually experimented with shape throughout his life, always searching for the best tone. In fact, he experimented so much with the shape of his violins that it is often said that no two of his instruments are exactly identical.<sup>14</sup> Probably the best of his instruments are those which followed the "Long Strads," violins which, although they retained the rather low arch of the "Long Strad," were approximately the same width as the Amatese designs, with alterations in the curvature of the sides.

### III. The Effect of Varnish on the Tone of the Violin.

Many volumes have been written concerning violin varnish, its importance in relation to tone, and various methods for its preparation. However, the general consensus of opinion among violin experts today is that the effect of varnish upon tone has been over-emphasized. In a recent experiment by the Messrs. Hill identical violins, some varnished, others unvarnished, were played alternately behind a screen, and experts were asked to choose by the sound of the violin which were varnished. Ninety per cent of the answers were wrong. Although the addition of varnish does give a slight metallic shading to the tone, many experts believe that it is so small that it cannot be detected by the human ear. As Mr. Farga points out,

The actual value of the varnish seems to lie in the fact that a properly varnished instrument keeps its pleasant tone indefinitely, while an unvarnished violin loses it after about ten years.<sup>15</sup>

George Fry places more importance upon the varnish,

Dissemination of the fibers of the wood is caused by the vibrations of sound in the violin—changing atmospheric conditions cause reduction of agglutination of the fibers. The varnish, while not prohibiting the deterioration, retards it and reduces its effect on tone by stiffening qualities on the sounding-faces.<sup>16</sup>

An interesting counter-argument to this point lies in the fact that the inner surfaces of all violins are unvarnished. Although the application of varnish to the inner surface might reduce dissemination even further, the chance is great that the varnish would alter the conduction properties of the wood.

The varnish of Stradivari seems to be a product which the master-builder developed through time. His violins indicate that each attempt



improved the clarity of the varnish, until he achieved that soft-finished, rich golden and remarkably transparent varnish so characteristic of a Strad. However, since the sealing qualities of his varnish can be accomplished with today's crude variety, it would seem that the search for the precise duplicate of Stradivari's varnish would be irrelevant in a study of tone.

#### IV. The Quality of Workmanship and Its Effect Upon the Tone of a Violin.

Although the material, varnish, and shape of the violin can conceivably be duplicated, the one character of the Stradivari violin that is unique is the maker's skill in the manipulation of the many components of the violin during construction. As Mr. Balfoort says,

" . . . The extraordinary results which he obtained he owed entirely to his great genius, which was able to combine together in complete harmony both wood and varnish, dimensions and general shape and all the other incalculable factors."<sup>17</sup>

Or, in the words of Franz Farga,

It has to be borne in mind . . . that exquisite instruments were built in . . . Cremona . . . at a time when the use of the higher notes and many other miraculous feats which can be performed on a violin were still unknown . . . Yet, even stranger is the fact that later on violin-makers were unable to create instruments comparable to those old masterpieces, although the mathematical rules of their design had been discovered."<sup>18</sup>

One might logically conclude that Stradivari had some general principle that he followed in the construction of his instruments. However, as Mr. Hart says, this is not necessarily true,

If Stradivari constructed his instruments upon philosophical principles, the chief element of variation in the treatment of any particular instrument must have been the difference of quality in the material; it is evident that a method eminently successful when applied to wood of a certain texture and character, would ensure as eminent a failure if applied indiscriminately in all cases.<sup>19</sup>

It should be stressed that the tone referred to as Stradivarian applies only to similar-toned instruments made by one man. These tones, although they are similar, are also individually different and distinct, for "consecutive reproduction of any kind of tone is the most infrequent as well as the most difficult thing in . . . fiddle making."<sup>20</sup> The fact that Stradivari was able to produce tones so similar is but another tribute to his genius. This genius is even more apparent when one considers the great number of violin-makers who have dedicated their lives to duplication of Stradivari violins and failed. This is explained by William Orcutt as follows :

There is but one reason why other violin-makers may not have produced instruments equal in every way to those which bear the master's signature. Others have employed wood of equal quality; they have successfully imitated the dimensions and the joinery of the various parts. Stradivari's contemporaries at least had access to varnishes made of the same ingredients. What other makers lack is simply that something which cannot be explained—that gift of consummate genius which delivers its message to the world through the fingertips of those few children of God anointed among their fellows as chosen for that purpose.<sup>21</sup>

Since the time of Stradivari, most violin-makers have devoted their time and money to violins that are approximate duplicates of the Stradivari design. The art of violin-making has become a business for imitators, simply because everyone is willing to accept the fact that not only have Stradivari violins been best thus far, but that they will continue to reign indefinitely, never being equalled or surpassed. At this point, however, one cannot resist drawing a parallel between the violin situation of today and that of Italy when Amati was the great master and Stradivari was simply an apprentice to the master. At that time there were those people who believed that the violins of Amati would never be surpassed. However, one person did not believe this. He even ventured to stray from the accepted standards and experiment with the violin. This radical of Italian violin-makers was Stradivari. Where is our Stradivari of today who will be willing to stray from the bonds of convention and use original experimentation with tone? The question may be asked, "Where is the need for the new violin?" To this, one might reply that man did not need the airplane before 1904.

Any work of art that endures is a real message to the world for an artist who feels impelled to release it from his soul through the medium in which he works. These messages are expressed in different media—in stone, on canvas, in type.<sup>22</sup>

Stradivari's message to the world was in the form of wood, glue, varnish, and seventy years of his great genius, the fruits of which are still enjoyed some two centuries later by music lovers throughout the world.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Robert Alton, *Violin and Cello Building and Repairing* (London: Cassell and Co., 1946), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Dirk J. Balfourt, *Antonius Stradivarius* (Stockholm: The Continental Co., 1952), p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Balfourt, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Alton, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Lyon & Healy, *An Historical Sketch of the Violin and its Master Makers* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and Sons Co., 1900), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Braine, "The Stradivarius Violin," *The Etude*, October, 1928, p. 782.

<sup>7</sup> George Hart, *The Violin: Its Famous Makers and Their Imitators* (London: Dulau

and Co., Schott and Co., 1887), pp. 192-3.

<sup>8</sup> Hart, p. 199.

<sup>9</sup> Alton, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Hildalgo Moya and Towry Piper, *Violin Tone and Violin Makers* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1916), p. 84.

<sup>11</sup> Balfoort, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Hart, p. 191.

<sup>13</sup> Braine, p. 782.

<sup>14</sup> Hart, p. 198.

<sup>15</sup> Franz Farga, *Violins and Violinists* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 14-15.

<sup>16</sup> George Fry, *The Varnishes of the Italian Violin Makers . . .* (London; Stevens and Sons, Ltd., 1940), pp. 26-33.

<sup>17</sup> Balfoort, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Farga, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Hart, p. 199.

<sup>20</sup> Moya and Piper, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> William Dana Orcutt, *The Stradivari Memorial . . .* (Washington D.C: Library of Congress, 1938), p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Orcutt, p. 7.

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\* A firm: music dealers.



# Rhet as Writ

The cloud that beckoned him for many years was finally lifted.

In early marriages, usually either the boy or the girl or sometimes both are not mature enough to make rash decisions.

William Beebe and his assistant went down into the African waters to look at their bottoms. (Review of William Beebe's *Half-Mile Down*)

Now the driver is ready to take over and drive in his own reckless manor.

He became famous and was toasted wherever he went.

People who go out to drink take the money right out of their family's mouth.

My most important decision was to climb a tree.

During the years before college, many students have been under the guidance of their parents. Now they are on their own and trying to act accordingly. They now are entering the last corridor to adultery.

Definitions: speak-easy—used car salesman

cudgel—a stick, longer on one end than on the other

He told me that we were to go camping and skin diving on Turtle Island, an uninhibited island that no one had set foot on for years.

Directly in front of us was a large, ominous looking, spiral stare case. We lit two candles and walked up the stares.

The people of the countries Mr. Nixon visited admired him. In one country, he maintained his composure and dignity even though he was stoned, shouted at, and called names.

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## AWARDS

The *Caldron* will continue its policy of giving awards to the five best themes in each issue. The winners will be selected by the votes of the members of the freshman rhetoric staff.

The schedule of awards is as follows:

- First: Fifteen dollars and five dollars worth of books
- Second: Ten dollars and five dollars worth of books
- Third: Five dollars and five dollars worth of books
- Fourth: Five dollars worth of books
- Fifth: Five dollars worth of books

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- U. of I. Supply Store (The "Co-Op")